

ABSTRACT

- Title:** Strengthening Our Cities: Mayors Responding to Global Warming
- Organizers:** Susanne Fleek, Alaska Conservation Foundation
Ryan Bell, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
- Applicant:** Alaska Conservation Foundation (see attached 501c(3) IRS determination letter).
- Project Period:** May 1 – October 15, 2006. Pre-conference activities will begin on May 1, 2006 and a final report will be submitted no later than October 15, 2006. The conference will be held September 17-19, 2006.
- Project Cost:** The estimated cost for the conference is \$111,000. We are requesting \$25,000 from the EPA to support this project.
- Project Summary:** The “**Strengthening Our Cities: Mayors Responding to Global Warming**” project is a partnership of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), the Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF), and Mayor Mark Begich of Anchorage. We are also in discussions with the Center for Global Change and Arctic Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Global climate change is a complex issue that will take the combined action of leaders at every level of government to address. The goal of the summit is to help mayors protect their communities by launching local planning efforts to respond and adapt to global climate change. There is an immediate need in Alaska for mayors and other local leaders to take steps to assess and adapt to its impacts. ACF has been working closely with the US EPA Alaska office to raise awareness in the state about global climate change. EPA has recently determined climate change is a priority for the Great American West Ecoregion.

This gathering is part of a national effort by ICLEI to engage mayors in developing local solutions to climate change. In 2005, ICLEI hosted the first annual “Sundance Summit: A Mayors’ Gathering on Climate Protection”, to raise the profile of local actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide mayors with policy tools to further their local climate protection efforts. In 2006, ICLEI is launching a US Mayors’ Council on Climate Protection to provide leadership and guidance in developing new services and approaches to engage local governments on the issue.

The Anchorage conference fits into this national approach by educating mayors on the impacts and adaptation measures for global climate change. By bringing mayors from across the country together with Alaska local and tribal officials, the mayors will see and hear how global climate change is affecting local governments right now and the challenges it poses to the lower-48 in the near future. It will also focus mayors’ attention on what they can and need to do to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to the impacts of global climate change.

A bi-partisan group of approximately 35 mayors from Alaska and the lower-48 will participate in the conference. Mayors will view the impacts of climate change firsthand: melting glaciers, damaged infrastructure, altered natural resources, and emerging public health threats. They will hear from climate scientists, tribal leaders, government officials, and business representatives about the challenges global climate change is posing to Alaska. The second day of the conference will focus on adaptation planning, focusing on the tools available to help mayors reduce and adapt to climate impacts, such as extreme weather events, sea level rise, natural resource damage, and public health risks.